



**Washington State
Representative
Deb Wallace**

**17th Legislative
District**

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Assistant Majority Whip
Member, Transportation
Member, State Government
Member, Technology,
Telecommunications
& Energy
Member, Joint Legislative
Audit and Review

2004 Legislative Accountability Report



Making a Difference in State Government

Spring 2004

Dear Neighbors and Friends,

It is an honor to serve as your representative to the state government. The 2004 legislative session passed quickly in a 60-day flurry of activity on education reforms, budget changes and other legislation.

Please consider this newsletter to be my accountability report to you. If we want to raise the bar in state government and accurately measure performance, I want to include my role as a legislator. Accountability standards offer a key to future improvements. Specifically, I want to assess how we — as legislators — are strengthening these critical areas for Washington: economic integrity, education, health care affordability, job creation and retention, and communication with you.

I look forward to hearing from you. If you have questions or concerns, please take a few minutes to call, e-mail or fill out the attached postcard. I also hope you can attend my town hall meeting May 13, 6:30 p.m., at Hockinson High School in Brush Prairie. Your participation helps me achieve the standards we set for our elected officials.

Best regards,

Deb Wallace

***Town Hall
Meeting***

Thursday, May 13, 6:30 p.m.

Hockinson High School
16819 NE 159th Street
Brush Prairie, WA 98606

Economy: Creating Good Jobs

A way to deliver a boost for Washington companies is to give targeted tax relief with accountability, particularly for biotech, high-tech and other industries that create high-wage jobs.

I voted **Yes** on a bill that renews existing incentives for companies creating infrastructure and actually doing research and development in Washington.

Basically, this bill makes our tax structure competitive with other states we compete with for bio-tech and other high-tech businesses.

Accountability standards built into the law help determine if the incentives create jobs and products, without compromising confidential information from the companies.

I sponsored a public works bill that will generate an estimated 11,000 jobs and nearly \$1 billion in economic activity through water, road and other infrastructure loans to local governments statewide.

The bill recommended \$236.3 million for 79 projects, the single largest amount ever brought forward by the Public Works Board. An additional \$245.9 million will be provided by the local governments to complete the infrastructure improvements. More than \$26 million is dedicated toward projects in Clark County.

Some projects include: improved storage and water lines for Clark Public Utilities; expanded capacity for the Hazel Dell sewer district; new wells; and fixes to several roads. You can see the project list at www.pwb.wa.gov



Transportation: Keeping Washington Moving

I also supported the transportation budget adjustments, because our economy needs to keep people and goods moving. Traffic woes will probably be lessened by I-5 and I-205 improvements. We didn't expand regional transportation investment districts (RTID), which would allow areas like ours to vote on funding fixes to our area's problems. I will continue to fight for expanded RTID.

Schools: Increasing K-12 Achievement

Education remains a top priority of the Legislature. Our children deserve the best schools and educators possible, and that means careful, smart reforms of the system. This year, we took the opportunity to make substantial change which I supported.

We passed reforms to the state's K-12 assessment standards—the WASL—to allow up to four retakes of the test. The law also provides for alternative assessments for students that can't take the tests. We must give every student a chance to succeed, while maintaining the integrity of our educational standards.

Some schools need more help in raising students to the levels Washingtonians expect. By re-focusing the Learning Assistance Program (LAP), we direct money to the low-income schools that need it most. Previously, schools that raised test scores lost that crucial funding, despite continuing lack of adequate dollars, and this law fixes that imbalance.



School levies, approved by local voters, put more money into our schools. We fixed the law, so school districts can gather the full amount voters approve.

This year, 31 school levies in our state failed despite passing with more than 50 percent of the vote. An antiquated law states that school levies need a 60 percent majority to pass. I voted **Yes** to allow the voters to decide whether they want to pass a school levy by 50 percent plus one vote – a simple majority. The bill did not pass this year, but I will push to see it passed next year.

Higher Education: Greater Access

By 2008, 30,000 more high school graduates will be knocking on the doors of the colleges and universities in our state. These deserving individuals will be denied admission unless we start acting now to make room for them.

I voted **Yes** for the supplemental budget to increase enrollment in our state colleges by 3,000 students, mainly in high demand fields like high-tech, bio-tech, and nursing. We are doing the right thing by providing tax breaks for high-tech companies to create job growth. But we must also make sure that our workers are well-qualified to land these jobs, instead of workers from out of state who have the degrees and training that employers are looking for.

Another successful bill — especially significant for our Vancouver area — could eventually lead to the establishment of a true four-year university in southwestern Washington.

Rep. Deb Wallace is pleased to provide you with this 2004 Legislative Accountability Report. Please let her know your thoughts by filling out and returning this postcard.

Please
place
stamp
here

RESPOND



Return to:
Rep. Deb Wallace
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Health Care: Increasing Affordability

Many small business owners will tell you they cannot afford health care for workers because state law mandates that all health plans must contain an extensive list of therapies and treatments. These requirements add greatly to the cost and can



put insurance out of reach. Offering slimmed-down plans at less expensive prices means more chances to afford health care.

We brought this type of flexibility into the market while maintaining proper safeguards, through a bill

that allows insurance providers and consumers a wider range of options to choose from.

- Funded the **reduction of toxins such as mercury, PBTs and dangerous flame retardants** in our water.
- Made a **“no oil spill”** policy that emphasizes prevention.

Financial Health: Prioritizing Government

We put together a modest supplemental budget—less than 1 percent of the total biennial budget—with no new taxes, a \$300 million reserve, and some fixes to the deep cuts made last year to Washington’s safety net.

Two main features are eliminating premiums for many low-income families with children on Medicaid, and granting an agreed-to raise to home health care workers. Both budget items help our state’s neediest citizens.

I voted **Yes** on this budget, because it continues sensible, prioritized budgeting started last year. We need to maintain our financial integrity while supporting key services.

Environment: Maintaining Integrity

The short 2004 Legislative session was productive for environmental issues and preserving Washington’s natural beauty. Among the key changes, we:

- Created the **first climate policy legislation in the state’s history**, a step toward reducing global warming. Fossil-fuel power plants must compensate for their carbon dioxide emissions by, for example, planting trees that won’t be cut, grants to cities for buses that run on cleaner fuels, or investments in renewable energy.
- Helped clean up **stormwater pollution**, toxic runoff from industrial and construction sites, through a bill negotiated and applauded by both the business and environmental communities.

State Primary Election: A New System

When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled our blanket primary unconstitutional, the task of establishing a new primary-election system came to the Legislature. According to the plan that passed the Legislature, voters could vote for anyone of any party and the top two primary candidates would move on to the general election. A backup plan, with party primary ballots, was included.

The “top two” was much like the soon-to-be-defunct blanket primary that we’ve had for 70 years. The big difference is that a general election in November might feature two candidates from the same party – and minor-party candidates will rarely make it to November.

Dear Deb:

Sincerely,

Contact information:

The governor vetoed the “top two” system, leaving the backup plan, which calls for primary elections only for major parties. Voters must choose only one party’s primary ballot under the backup plan. The final result is still up in the air.

I voted **Yes** on the “top two” plan with the backup option.

Communication: Reaching Out

“Freedom is when the people can speak, democracy is when the government listens.”

True words, and I believe that we can improve our communities and state through better communication. Our government works best through your participation.

As an example, a member of our district came to me with the news that his homeowners’ association banned the display of U.S. flags and flagpoles. With overwhelming support, we passed a bill to re-affirm the basic freedom to display the symbol of

our country, despite homeowners’ association rules. Without that constituent’s voice, I would not have been able to help.

I want to keep those lines of communication open. Please call, e-mail or send the postcard to me, and tell me your ideas, concerns and comments. I also invite you to my **town hall** on May 13 at Hockinson High School.

Contact Deb:

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